

Message Text

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42

ACTION L-03

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 SP-02 SS-15 PM-04 DODE-00

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FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5995

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 8309

EO 11652: ADS AUG 20, 1975

TAGS: PFOR, MILI, EG, US

SUBJECT: PORT SAID MINE CLEARANCE

REF: STATE 196462

1. I AM DISTURBED BY REFTEL, WHICH SEEMS TO IGNORE SOME PERTINENT REALITIES. FIRST, GOE LAWYERS (MFA DND MINWAR) WILL HAVE TO LOOK AT THE PROPOSED EXCHANGE OF NOTES AMENDING THE APRIL 1974 AGREEMENT BEFORE FAHMY WILL SIGN ANY SUCH DOCUMENT. SECOND, FAHMY IS IN ALEXANDRIA AND WILL IN NEXT FEW DAYS BE FULLY OCCUPIED WITH SECRETARY'S UPCOMING SHUTTLE. THERE IS THUS A SIMPLE PHYSICAL PROBLEM IN ARRANGING FOR EXCHANGE OF NOTES. THIRD, QUESTION OF WHETHER APRIL 1974 EXCHANGE NEEDS BE AMENDED WAS RAISED BY FAHMY AS LONG AGO AS EARLY JULY IN HIS LETTER REQUESTING US NAVY HELP. I REPEATED THIS QUERY A WEEK AGO (CAIRO 7948), POINTING OUT THAT PAST PRACTICE HAS SHOWN THAT SUCH EXCHANGES TAKE A BIT OF TIME. I AM FRANKLY PUZZLED WHY AS SIMPLE A TEXT AS THAT CITED REFTEL COULD NOT BE PROVIDED BEFORE TODAY. FOURTH, USS INCHOM IS ALREADY IN PORT SAID AND PREPARED TO BEGIN MINESWEEPING TOMORROW, AUGUST 21, WHEN 15-DAY CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION EXPIRES. I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT AS A PRACTICAL MATTER WE INTEND KEEP INCHOM IDLE IN SEARING PORT SAID WHILE THE EXCHANGE OF NOTES AMENDING THE EARLIER AGREEMENT IS BEING FINALIZED. FIFTH, ANY

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ATTEMPT ON OUR PART TO DO SO WOULD UNDERSTANDABLY BE VIEWED

BY GOE AS A CRASS PRESSURE TACTIC AND SOUR POSITIVE ATMOSPHERE WE WANT NIMBUS STREAM TO CREATE. MOREOVER, COMING ON EVE OF SECRETARY'S UPCOMING SHUTTLE, NEGATIVE EGYPTIAN REACTION SUCH A TACTIC WOULD ALSO SPILL OVER ON HIS DELICATE MISSION.

2. WERE THERE SUFFICIENT TIME, I WOULD HAVE PREFERRED TO NEGOTIATE THE TEXT OF THE NOTE IN ORDER TO EXPEDITE THE EXCHANGE. HOWEVER, IN VIEW OF URGENCY, I MET TODAY WITH MINSTATE FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS MOHAMMAD RIAD AND GAVE HIM SIGNED NOTE, USING TEXT CONTAINED IN REFTEL AND ADDRESSED TO FAHMY. I TOLD HIM, BUT WITHOUT BELABORING THE POINT, THAT SWEEPING OPERATIONS CANNOT BEGIN UNTIL WE HAVE AN AGREEMENT DEFINING SCOPE OF OPERATIONS AND STATUS OF PARTICIPATING US PERSONNEL. I ASKED THAT NOTE BE SENT TO FAHMY IN ALEXANDRIA WITH REQUEST IT BE GIVEN EXPEDITIOUS HANDLING. SINCE I EXPECT TO MEET WITH FAHMY TOMORROW EVENING IN ALEXANDRIA, I SAID I WOULD BE PREPARED DISCUSS MATTER WITH HIM AT THAT TIME IF HE WISHED. RIAD SENT NOTE TO FAHMY IN ALEXANDRIA BY SPECIAL MESSENGER.

3. I SEE NO REASON WHY NIMBUS STREAM MISSION SHOULD NOT BEGIN TOMORROW AS PLANNED. WHILE WE DO REQUIRE AGREEMENT DEFINING SCOPE OF NEW OPERATIONS, FACT IS OUR APRIL 1974 EXCHANGE ALREADY LAYS OUT STATUS OF PARTICIPATING USG PERSONNEL. FAHMY'S LETTER OF JULY 6 REQUESTING US NAVY ASSISTANCE SPECIFICALLY STATED GOE READINESS REGARD APRIL 1974 EXCHANGE OF NOTES AS VALID AND WE, TOO, SEEM TO ACCEPT THIS AS INDICATED BY FACT WE ARE SIMPLY AMENDING PROVISIONS. THE DELAY IN PROVIDING TEXT OF PROPOSED AMENDMENT IS ENTIRELY OURS AND IT SEEMS EMINENTLY UNFAIR TO PENALIZE EGYPTIANS FOR OUR SLOWNESS. IN CIRCUMSTANCES, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND WE PROCEED WITH NIMBUS STREAM MISSION AND CONCURRENTLY FINALIZE NEEDED EXCHANGE OF NOTES. THERE IS A PRECEDENT FOR THIS AND I THINK WE CAN COUNT ON EGYPTIANS TO COOPERATE.

4. I AM IN NO POSITION TO INSTRUCT USS INCHON TO EXECUTE OR HOLD IN PERFORMING HER PRESCRIBED MISSION. I TRUST, HOWEVER, THAT PREVIOUS US NAVY EXECUTE ORDERS STILL APPLY AND THAT MISSION WILL BEGIN AS SCHEDULED.
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